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ABSTRACT

Within the framework of a longitudinal investigation, a group of parents were studied during their transition to parenthood. The families were selected according to distinct socio-demographic variables. Fathers and mothers were interviewed separately before becoming parents, and again when the infants were 10- to 12-months of age. The interview focused on dimensions of the division of household labor, including household and childrearing chores, the parents' satisfaction with the distribution of labor, and the expected and actual impact of the infant on the household chores. The results showed a statistically non-significant change toward a relatively more traditional redistribution of labor and a significant decrease in the parents' satisfaction. Scores for division of labor for household chores and childrearing and satisfaction were positively correlated between Time 1 and Time 2. There was no relation between expected changes in distribution of household chores and the actual changes. Expectations were too optimistic in comparison to the modifications that occurred. There was a more prominent traditional division of household chores after the transition to parenthood for primiparous parents and those with low educational levels. Fathers' involvement in childrearing at Time 2 was lower than expectations at Time 1 for single-earner families and according to fathers. (KB)

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DIVISION OF DOMESTIC LABOR AND CHILDREARING: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY DURING THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD[1]

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In the framework of a longitudinal investigation, a group of parents were studied during their transition to parenthood. The families were chosen according to distinct socio-demographic variables. Fathers and mothers were interviewed separately, before becoming parents and when the babies were 10-12 months old, using a long interviewes tapping into various contents related to their transitions to parenthood. Data used in this poster explore some dimensions of the division of labor into the home: household and chilrearing chores, the parents' satisfaction with the distribution of domestic labor, and the expected and the real impact of the baby in the household chores. The results obtained show a change to a relatively more traditional redistribution of the chores and a decrease in the satisfaction, but also confirm an important developmental stability during the process to becoming parents. We also coment the sociodemographic differences in these trends during the transition to parenthood.

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AIMS

→ To study the change in the division of domestic labor during the transition to parenthood.
→ To analize the correspondence or not between the expected and the real childrearing.
→ To analize the expected and the real changes in the distribution of household chores after the baby's birth.
→ To explore the sociodemographics differences in the topics refered above during the process to becoming parent.

METHOD

Subjets

A group of families (147 subjects, 90 mothers and 57 fathers) were studied longitudinally from the beginning of the mother's pregnancy (T1) until their children were 10-12 months old (T2). The parents differed according to several sociodemographic variables: previous experience as parents (primiparous and non-primiparous), level of education (high, medium, and low), mothers' labour force (single- and dual-earner families), and habitat of residence (urban and rural).

Instruments and procedure

At the begining of the pregnancy (T1), fathers and mothers were interviewed separately using the Interview at the Women's Pregnancy (IWP). This instrument were designed to approach several contents related to the transition to parenthood process: social network and social support, marital relationships, division of domestic labor, expected father's involvement on childrearing, resource sources for facing parenthood, etc. When the babies were 10-12 months hold (T2), families were visited at their homes. We interviewed parents again, using the Interview at the First Year (IFY), with similar characteristics that IWP and adding contents, like the satisfaction with the parenthood or the self- and partner-evaluation as parent. In boths IWP and IFY, we explore the division of domestic labor using an instrument wich provide two scores refered both household and chilrearing distribution of chores; at T1, the childrearing questions were raised as the expectations about these chores. In the four cases, the higher puntuations show the more mother's and the less father's involvement. In both interviewes we also obtained two scores, one of them related to the parent's satisfaction with the division of domestic labor, and the other related to the expected influence of babies' arrival in household matters (T1), and the real change after the baby's birth (T2).

RESULTS

We found a slight increase of the two division scores, wich show a relative greater mothers' involvement and a more traditionalistic division of domestic labor at T2; nevertheless, both increase were not statistically relevant (see table 1). We also found an important and significant ($t=4.88$, $p=.000$) decrease in the parent's satisfaction with the distribution of homework. Data obtained also show high correlations between scores of T1 and T2 (see table 2), wich indicate a large degree of continuity into each family.

	T1	T2	Sig.
Household chores	33.10	34.29	
Childrearing chores	36.85	38.00	
Satisfaction	4.33	3.74	*

Table 1: Longitudinal change between T1 and T2 (*$p < .05$)

T1 ↓ T2→	Household chores	Childrearing chores	Satisfaction
Household chores	.424 ****	.283 ***	-.274 **
Expected childrearing	.141	.342 ***	-.141
Satisfaction	-.085	-.122	.447 ****

Table 2: Contiunity between T1 and T2 (correlations)
(**p < .01 ***p < .005 ****p < .001)

As we can see at Figure 1, there is no relation between the expected changes in the distribution of household chores and the real changes in this topic after the baby's birth. Expectations were too optimistic in comparation to the modifications took place indeed.

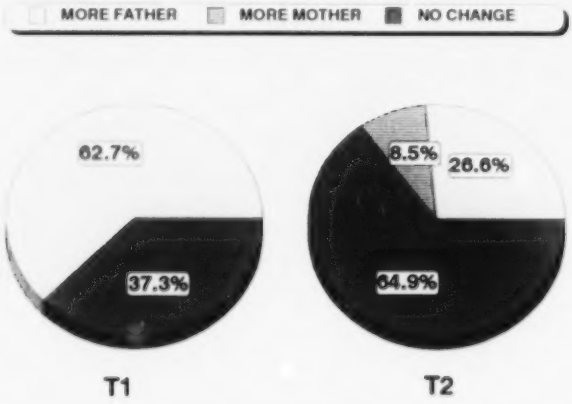

FIGURE 1: Changes in the division of domestic labor (T1: expected; T2: real) before and after the baby's birth

In order to explore the sociodemographic variability in these topics during the transition to parenthood, we perform independent statistic analysis for each variable. As we can see at tables 3-6, results obtained show a large degree of differences and variations in developmental changes in all dimensions, except for the relation between expected and real change in domestic labor after the baby's birth. Specifically, we found a bigger traditional division of household chores after the transition to parenthood in:

→ parents with a low level of education (see table 5)
→ primiparous parents (see table 6)

We also found a lower father's involvement in childrearing at T2 compared to expectations in T1 in:

→ single-earner families (see table 4)
→ fathers' data (see table 3)

About the decreasing degree of satisfaction, only the parents with medium and (specially) high educational level showed non statistically differences, that is, only in these cases we found similar degrees of satisfaction before and after the transition to parenthood (see table 5).

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	Mothers			Fathers		
	T1	T2	Sig.	T1	T2	Sig.
Household chores	34.41	35.39		32.30	33.24	
Childrearing chores	38.92	38.77		33.34	37.02	***
Satisfaction	4.35	3.47	****	4.51	4.03	**

Table 3: Longitudinal change according to gender (**p < .01 ***p < .005 ****p < .001)

	Dual-earner families			Single-earner families		
	T1	T2	Sig.	T1	T2	Sig.
Household chores	31.95	32.00		34.16	35.45	
Childrearing chores	35.66	35.66		37.19	39.14	#
Satisfaction	4.18	3.50	***	4.50	3.75	****

Table 4: Longitudinal change according to mothers' labour force
(#p ≈ .05 ***p < .005 ****p < .001)

	Low			Medium			High		
	T1	T2	Sig.	T1	T2	Sig.	T1	T2	Sig.
Household chores	33.95	36.95	**	33.15	31.71		33.45	33.81	
Childrearing chores	37.21	39.97	**	37.02	36.35		33.90	36.90	
Satisfaction	4.56	3.60	****	4.37	3.96	#	4.00	3.18	

Table 5: Longitudinal change according to level of education
(#p ≈ .05 **p < .01 ****p < .001)

	Primiparous			Non-primiparous		
	T1	T2	Sig.	T1	T2	Sig.
Household chores	31.52	34.38	*	35.85	34.72	
Childrearing chores	36.04	38.00		37.57	38.20	
Satisfaction	4.43	3.59	****	4.40	3.80	***

Table 6: Longitudinal change according to experience as parent
(* p < .05 ***p < .005 ****p < .001)

CONCLUSIONS

As other investigations, our longitudinal analyses show a relative larger traditionalism in the division of labor into the home after becoming parent. Our data also show that this general tendency is greater according to several sociodemographic variables. It seems clear that these dimensions that involve differences include distinct levels of information, beliefs and knowledge and other contextual variables.

In short, our data reveal important individual differences related to the transition to parenthood, specifically in relation to the division of the chores into the home, and the satisfaction with that distribution between fathers and mothers.

Likewise, results obtaned in our study reveal an important developmental continuity. So, even though baby's arrival means indeed an important impact in the intrafamiliar dynamic, data show high levels of similiraty into each home, and confirm the existence of a large "continuity between the changes" along life span.